



# Consumer Guide

## Accessible TV and Set-Top Box Controls, Menus, and Program Guides

If you are having trouble activating closed captioning or video description, or if you are blind or visually impaired and you are having difficulty accessing the controls, menus, or program guides to select and display video programming, new consumer accessibility rules have been put in place to help.

The FCC established accessibility requirements for televisions, set-top boxes, and similar devices that receive or play back video programming and are manufactured, leased, or requested after December 20, 2016.

### Requirements for TVs and Internet video playback devices

Accessibility requirements apply to TVs and other devices designed to receive or play back video programming, including personal computers, tablets and smartphones with pre-installed video players or pre-installed applications for watching video programming.

The following functions, if built into the device and provided as on-screen text menus or other visual indicators, must be audibly accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, if achievable:

- Power on/off
- Volume adjust and mute
- Channel/program selection
- Display of channel/program information
- Setup options
- Closed captioning control and display options
- Video description control
- Current configuration information
- Playback controls (such as play, pause, rewind, fast forward, stop, and record)
- Input source selection

Any of these built-in functions that are not provided as on-screen text menus or other visual indicators must be made accessible by providing at least one mode that does not require user vision or color perception, and permits operation by users with low vision, without relying on audio output.

If closed captioning is built into the device, it must include a simple and easy-to-use method for activating closed captioning.

Also, if video description is built into the device, it must include a simple and easy-to-use method for activating video description.

### Requirements for set-top boxes and similar devices

FCC accessibility rules also apply to devices used to access subscription television services, including services provided by cable, satellite, and over telephone company fiber. These devices include cable and satellite set-top boxes, as well as devices with a built-in CableCARD slot or a pre-installed application to access subscription television services.



The following functions, if built into the device and provided as on-screen text menus or guides, must be audibly accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, if achievable:

- Channel/program selection
- Display of channel/program information
- Setup options
- Closed captioning control and display options
- Video description control
- Current configuration information
- Playback controls (such as play, pause, rewind, fast forward, stop, and record)
- Input source selection

The power on/off, volume adjust, and mute functions must be made accessible by providing at least one mode that does not require user vision or color perception, and permits operation by users with low vision, without relying on audio output.

Also, if closed captioning is built into the device, it must include a simple and easy-to-use method for activating closed captioning.

### **Exceptions to the rules**

Compliance is not required until December 20, 2018 for relatively small subscription television service operators and systems.

Compliance is not required until December 20, 2021 for display-only monitors and video projectors.

### **How to acquire and use an accessible device**

Device manufacturers and subscription television service providers must provide information on their websites about the following:

- The availability of accessible devices
- The person, office, or entity who can answer questions about the availability of accessible devices, and how to activate and use accessibility features or where that information can be found

If requested, they must also provide information and documentation, such as user guides, in an accessible format.

Subscription television service providers and manufacturers of devices that access subscription television services must provide notice on their websites about how individuals who are blind or visually impaired can request accessible devices.

- The process for requesting and obtaining an accessible device must take about the same amount of time and cannot be more burdensome than the way other consumers obtain devices.
- When sophisticated equipment or services are provided as an accessibility solution at no additional charge to the consumer, service providers and manufacturers are permitted to require an individual to provide documentation demonstrating that the individual is blind or visually impaired.



## Filing a complaint

Complaints about the accessibility of TV and set-top box controls, menus, and program guides may be submitted through the FCC's online [Consumer Complaint Center](#). Complaints may also be submitted by phone or mail:

- Phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322)
- TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)
- American Sign Language (ASL) Consumer Support Line: 1-844-432-2275 (videophone)
- Mail:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Please include your name, address, contact information, and as much detail about your complaint as possible.

If you need assistance filing a complaint, please contact the FCC's Disability Rights Office at [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov) or by calling 202-418-2517 (voice), 1-888-835-5322 (TTY), or 1-844-432-2275 (videophone).

## Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

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